

Protecting native forests combats climate change.

Jess Beckerling, WA Forest Alliance, July 2012

It is recognised world wide that urgently protecting native forests is fundamental to mitigating dangerous climate change.

Mature forests store significantly higher quantities of carbon than young and repeatedly logged forests. It takes, on average, 150 years for a forest to recover 90% of its carbon store, and the old trees store the most carbon.

(Roxburgh, S.H., Wood, S.W., Mackey, B.G, Woldendorp, G. & Gibbons, P. (2006) Assessing the carbon sequestration potential of managed forests: a case study from temperate Australia. *Journal of Applied Ecology* 43, 1149 – 1159.)

There are two issues; we need climate change mitigation right now, not in 150 years time, and secondly, logged forests don't get to 150 years old before they're logged again. So the logging lobby's story that logging is good for climate change is completely false.

Logging releases huge volumes of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. The post-logging burn and soil carbon disturbance are both significant. Then there's also the fact that the vast majority of the wood removed goes into products like firewood, charcoal and woodchips which very quickly release their stored carbon into the atmosphere too.

Only 12 – 15% of the logs sold out of our native forests actually end up as sawn timber for building materials etc, which store carbon for any length of time. The logging lobby is trying to sell a climate friendly image which isn't kidding anyone.

(Forest Products Commission Annual Report 2010-2011)

A major 2008 study done by the Australian National University has demonstrated that protecting the eucalypt forests in the South Eastern part of Australia is equivalent to reducing the greenhouse gas emissions released in 2005 by 24%.

The entire transport sector in that same year was responsible for 14% of total emissions. So, of course with the developing carbon economy, and companies seeking offset schemes, this represents a major financial opportunity for the south-west.

(<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Chapter10102008>)

Reflecting the findings of the 2006 study cited above, the report says,

'The carbon stock of forests subject to commercial logging, and of monoculture plantations in particular, will always be significantly less on average (~40 to 60 per cent depending on the intensity of land use and forest type) than the carbon stock of natural, undisturbed forests.'

(Brendan G Mackey, Heather Keith, Sandra L Berry and David B Lindenmayer (2008) *Green Carbon, The Role of Natural Forests in Carbon Storage*, ANU E Press.)

Another ANU study, done in 2012 and based on Tasmania's forests, showed just how profitable forest protection could be; a median value of around \$1 billion in carbon credits could be generated in the first decade.

(Tasmanian Forests Intergovernmental Agreement: An Assessment of its carbon value. ANU Centre for Climate Law and Policy, March 2012 http://www.environment.gov.au/land/forests/independent-verification/pubs/ivg_conservation_8a_carbon.pdf)

Logging is highly destructive and it is costing hard working West Australian taxpayers money to keep the logging industry propped up. We can't log sustainably, or even profitably, but we profit from protection of our native forests by developing a carbon offset scheme.

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